LAND O'LAKES
VENTURE 37

GENDER INTEGRATION GUIDE

MARCH 2024 | MARGARET KASIKO & MEREDITH SAGGERS, LAND O'LAKES VENTURE37

Photo caption: Clemence, a cooperative member, attends a women's leadership seminar hosted by the USAID Cooperative Development Activity 4 in Rwanda.

INTRODUCTION

Gender integration refers to strategies applied in development projects to consider gender norms and to compensate for gender-based inequalities. Effectively integrating gender into development programming is universally recognized as critical to closing development gaps. Women, youth, and other traditionally marginalized populations play important roles in the development of their households, communities, businesses, and countries, yet their differing needs are not always considered when designing and implementing a development project. Land O'Lakes Venture37 is committed to ensuring all women, men, and boys and girls those of different gender identities benefit and thrive through all our projects. By addressing gender inequities and constraints grounded in entrenched gender roles and power dynamics that impact both men and women, boys and girls, Venture37 will strengthen the effectiveness of its development programming. This is not only the right thing to do; it is smart development.

The goal of this guide is to provide development implementers with the knowledge and tools necessary to integrate gender during three key project lifecycle elements: 1) project design; 2) project implementation, and 3) monitoring, evaluation, and learning. **Section 1** explains the underlying gender framework used to guide our gender integration; **Section 2** describes how to conduct a gender analysis, the first step in integrating gender; and **Section 3** provides tangible instructions for integrating gender in the three key project lifecycle elements. This guide should be used in conjunction with the Gender Integration Checklist, linked here.

Understanding the key terminology for gender integration is important before reading this Guide and associated Checklist. Please refer to the annex for key definitions.

SECTION 1: THE GENDER INTEGRATION CONTINUUM

To demonstrate how our projects should integrate gender to address inequalities, Venture37 uses a conceptual framework developed by the USAID Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG) known as the **Gender Integration Continuum**[1] (Figure 1). This framework categorizes approaches by how they treat gender norms and inequality.

The continuum indicates that projects can address gender inequalities in many ways. **Gender Blind** projects do not consider how gender norms affect the achievement of objectives or how they will be affected by the project, while **Gender Aware** projects deliberately examine and address the anticipated impact of gender norms. Within this continuum, there are three ways that a project design and implementation can take into account gender norms:
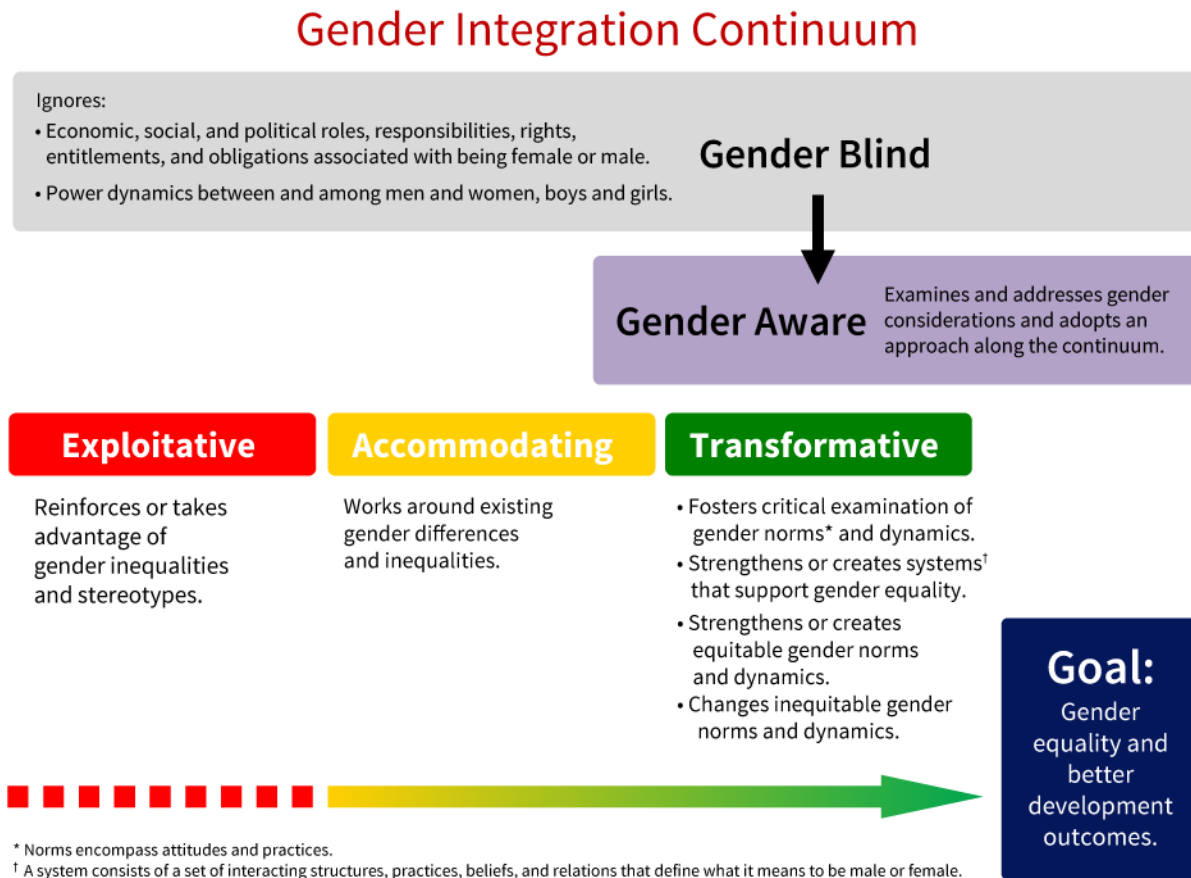
- **Gender exploitative** approaches take advantage of inequitable gender norms and existing imbalances in power to achieve project objectives.

- **Gender accommodating** approaches acknowledge the role of gender norms and

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[1] Source: Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG), 2009; Updated 2019.

inequalities and develop actions that adjust to and often compensate for them. a

- **Gender transformative** approaches actively attempt to examine, question, and change harmful gender norms and the imbalance of power between women and men as a means of reaching development and gender equality objectives.

Figure 1. USAID's Gender Equality Continuum Tool

Gender Integration Continuum

Ignores:
- Economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements, and obligations associated with being female or male.
- Power dynamics between and among men and women, boys and girls.

Gender Blind

Gender Aware — Examines and addresses gender considerations and adopts an approach along the continuum.

Exploitative	**Accommodating**	**Transformative**
Reinforces or takes advantage of gender inequalities and stereotypes.	Works around existing gender differences and inequalities.	• Fosters critical examination of gender norms* and dynamics. • Strengthens or creates systems† that support gender equality. • Strengthens or creates equitable gender norms and dynamics. • Changes inequitable gender norms and dynamics.

Goal: Gender equality and better development outcomes.

* Norms encompass attitudes and practices.
† A system consists of a set of interacting structures, practices, beliefs, and relations that define what it means to be male or female.

Source: Interagency Gender Working Group, 2009; updated 2019.

Venture37 aims to take a gender aware, transformative approach to gender integration, thus achieving project outcomes while transforming gender norms toward greater equality. However, in some contexts, it may be necessary for some components of a project to be accommodating as a first step toward transforming gender norms, roles, and relations. Under no circumstances, however, should Venture37 projects take advantage of harmful gender inequalities to pursue project outcomes. Venture37 projects should always abide by the principle of "Do No Harm".

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SECTION 2: GENDER ANALYSIS

The first step in gender integration into design, project implementation, and MEL is to understand the challenges and opportunities for men and women, boys and girls in the target sector or value chain. Therefore, conducting a **Gender Analysis** is the foundation of strategic and effective gender integration processes and should be planned and budgeted for as early in the project design and implementation process as possible. A gender analysis is a systematic study that examines the following:

- The different roles and norms for women, men, girls, boys, and other gender identities within the sector/value chain;

- The different level of power that each group has in society and the specific sector/value chain;

- The different needs, constraints, and opportunities of each group in participating and benefiting from potential project activities.

A gender analysis can take many forms depending on the time and resources available. It can be as simple as a desk research or as complex as primary data collection and analysis.

Intersectionality: While not the focus of this guide, it is important to note that our experiences are affected by intersecting parts of our identity, not just our gender. Other identities that may be important in a specific context include religion, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation. In many situations, it may be important to include one or more intersecting identities within the gender analysis that are important to the context of the country or sector of a project.

Venture37 recommends gender analyses utilize USAID's Six domains Framework, which define the domains of inquiry to examine through the analysis. Table 1, below, outlines the six dimensions and suggests questions to be answered within each dimension. The questions should be tailored to fit the specific context of a project.

DOMAIN	KEY QUESTIONS
Access to assets	• Do men and women, girls and boys have equal access to productive assets related to the target sector/value chain? • What constraints do men and women face in their access to assets? • Do men and women have equal access to financial resources – including money, savings, access to credit, ownership of property (including land) – that can be used as collateral to obtain credit? • Do men and women have equal access to the formal or informal communications networks that share project information, including social settings where networking may take place? • Do men and women have equal access to technologies, inputs, and services that support project activities, including training and other opportunities to develop skills? • How can the project be designed to ensure men and women have equal access to assets and inputs needed for the project?
Knowledge, beliefs, perceptions: Who knows what?	• What beliefs and perceptions shape gender identities and norms? • Do self-perceptions or levels of self-confidence help or hinder men and women from participation in the project activities? • Do men and women have unequal education or knowledge in areas that are important for successful implementation of the project? If yes, in what areas? • Will gender awareness training be required to ensure that individuals, families, and communities support female participants?
Practices and participation	• What are the roles of men and women in the target sectors/value chains? • What are the gender roles and responsibilities that dictate the activities in which men and women participate? • Are men and women likely to have equal access to, and equal participation in, available training sessions in conjunction with this project? • How can the project be designed in a way that facilitates active participation by both men and women?

DOMAIN	KEY QUESTIONS
Time and space	• How do men and women spend their time? Where and when do they spend this time? • What are the responsibilities of men and women regarding childcare and housework? What are the cultural norms regarding the division of labor between men and women in the areas of childcare and housework? • If women have greater responsibilities in these areas, do they have enough time to also engage in project activities? • Will participating in this project increase a woman's workload to an unsustainable level? • Would it be possible for women to participate in the project if support services (for example, childcare) were available to them? • Would a woman's home responsibilities prevent her from participating in a project at certain times of day or on certain days of the week? • Do men or women typically work or spend much of their time in locations that would make it difficult for them to participate in the project? • How do men and women participate in both the formal and informal economy, and how does it impact their participation in the project?
Legal rights and status	• How are women and men regarded and treated by customary and formal legal codes? • How are women and men treated in legislation related to the project? • Do any legal impediments prevent men and women from having an equal opportunity to participate in the project and/or experience equal outcomes? • In the legal or regulatory framework, do any special benefits or restrictions explicitly or indirectly target women or men?
Balance of power and decision making	• Who has the power to make decisions at the individual, household, community, municipality, and state levels? • Who makes household/business decisions within the target sector/value chains? • Do women have control over and benefit from the funds and assets they may accrue as a result of participating in a project? • Do women actively participate in formal decision-making structures/bodies that are relevant to the project activities? • Do women and men hold an equal number of decision-making positions in these entities?

SECTION 3: GENDER INTEGRATION INTO THE PROGRAM CYCLE

This section provides a high-level explanation of how development implementers should integrate gender into design, implementation, and MEL. This section should be used in conjunction with the Gender Checklist, which provides detailed questions that staff should ask themselves during each of these project lifecycle stages.

Project Design

During the design and planning of a project, design staff should consider a few different dimensions for gender integration: 1) Staff Capacity; 2) Gender Activities; 3) Budget.

- **Staff Capacity**

To effectively integrate gender into project design, the design team needs a staff or multiple staff with gender expertise. This could take the form of a gender expert on staff and/or a gender consultant. This gender team member should have knowledge of gender issues in the country and sector/value chain of interest. The role of this staff will be to 1) inform the rest of the design team on the key gender constraints and opportunities relevant to the project based on the gender analysis (as discussed above) and 2) suggest activities to ensure the design takes a gender transformative or — at a minimum — gender accommodating approach.

- **Gender Activities**

While designing the project, the team should assess each activity as to whether men and women will both be able to participate in and benefit from that activity. When it is determined that one group has constraints, the team, led by the gender expert, should design activities that will support that group to be able to benefit equally.

- **Budget**

The design team should allocate sufficient financial resources to implement the gender activities planned. Keep in mind that other budgetary items — such as a gender staff/consultant, gender analysis, and gender equality training with staff — are often needed to best carry out gender equality activities in the project, and thus should also be budgeted.

Project Implementation

During project implementation, the team will continue to build on the knowledge base gleaned during design to further understand the gendered constraints of men and women. The team should ensure gender integration in three main areas: 1) Staff Capacity; 2) Gender Action Plan; 3) Budget.

- **Staff Capacity**

To continue to integrate gender into project implementation, the team will need a gender advisor, either a full-time staff or a consultant. This gender advisor should be an expert in gender integration in the country and sector/value chain of interest. This staff will oversee the gender analysis and Gender Action Plan (GAP) development (see below), train staff on gender equality, and lead in the planning

and implementation of gender specific activities. This staff will also work closely with the MEL team to understand results of the project for men and women and suggest ways to adapt project activities.

- **Gender Action Plan Development and Implementation**

Project implementation should begin with an in-depth gender analysis to validate the findings and activities determined at design. The gender advisor or consultant will then work to develop a GAP based on the findings of the gender analysis and define the gender accommodating and transformative activities to be implemented to overcome constraints and take advantage of opportunities. The GAP should also include activities that meet our principle of "do no harm." In some circumstances, project activities could exacerbate gender-based violence in the participant households. The GAP will include appropriate mitigation activities and reporting protocols to address this possibility.

- **Budget**

While the project budget was developed during design, the team should reflect on the GAP to ensure that the activities are appropriately budgeted and adjust accordingly.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

Throughout project implementation, the MEL system for the project will track activities, measure impacts on the project participants, and adapt project implementation based on the findings. It is important that gender is integrated into the MEL system at the beginning of the project so the team can understand the differing participation and impact on men and women. Key areas of integration include: 1) Theory of Change and Indicators; 2) Data Collection; 3) Learning and Adaptation.

- **Theory of Change and Indicators**

During project design, typically the MEL team will lead a theory of change exercise. It is important that information from the gender analysis is incorporated into the Theory of Change to pinpoint the constraints that may be specific to men and women to ensure we are considering them in the project design. The theory of change also underpins the indicators that are selected to measure project progress and impact. The MEL staff should work closely with the gender expert during design and project implementation to ensure that there are appropriate gender equality indicators selected and measured throughout project implementation that are in line with the gender activities proposed. All people indicators should also be disaggregated by sex.

- **Data Collection**

Gender considerations should also be incorporated in data collection to ensure that both men and women participants provide their feedback and feel safe when they are being interviewed. Some key strategies to achieve this include: 1) using both male and female data collectors, as some men and women may feel more comfortable speaking to a person of their own sex for certain topics; 2) holding separate group discussions for men and women so that both groups feel more comfortable to speak up; 3) ensuring gender parity in sampling, etc. The strategies taken to ensure diverse voices are heard and

that all participants feel comfortable will depend on the specific context in the target country and sector/value chain and should be informed by the gender analysis findings.

- **Learning and Adaptation**

It is important that the gender disaggregated data and gender equality data collected is used to learn and adapt to the reality of project participants. To do this, project leaders need to create a culture of learning and adapting amongst the project implementation staff. At all reflection meetings, the team should discuss how the project is benefiting men and women differently, highlighting gender equality indicators and disaggregated data for people indicators. In certain situations where differences between men and women cannot be explained, further studies may need to be conducted to better understand the disparity. The team, led by the gender expert, should suggest, and adopt adaptions to project activities to minimize any inequality in project participation and benefits.

CONCLUSION

This Guide and associated Checklist provide the tools needed for development implementer staff to effectively integrate gender into design, implementation, and MEL to ensure both men and women can equally participate in and benefit from Venture37 project activities. Gender integration is not just the right thing to do; it's smart development. Using this guide, all Venture37 projects will take a gender transformative approach where possible and abide by the key principle of "do no harm."

OTHER RESOURCES

- USAID (n.d.). *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy*. USAID.gov. https://www.usaid.gov/gender-policy

- USAID (2023). *ADS Chapter 205: Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID'S Program Cycle*. USAID.gov. https://www.usaid.gov/about-us/agency-policy/series-200/205

- Interagency Gender Working Group, USAID, PACE (2017). *The Gender Integration Continuum: Training Session User Guide*. Interagency Gender Working Group. https://www.igwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/17-418-GenderContTraining-2017-12-12-1633_FINAL.pdf

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States (2023). *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems*. FAO. https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en?details=cc5060en

- Land O'Lakes Venture37 (formerly Land O'Lakes International Development (2015). *Integrating Gender throughout A Project's Life Cycle 2.0*. FSN Network. https://www.fsnnetwork.org/resource/integrating-gender-throughout-projects-life-cycle-20

- USAID (2024, January). *Standard Operating Procedure for Integrating Gender in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research*. USAID Learning Lab. https://usaidlearninglab.org/system/files/2024-02/ms-23-229-d4i-gender-sop_508_0_0.pdf

Annex: Gender Concepts and Definitions

Gender refers to the economic, social, political, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being women and men. The social definitions of what it means to be a woman, or a man vary among cultures and change over time. Gender is a sociocultural expression of characteristics and roles that are associated with certain groups of people with reference to their sex and sexuality. Gender, together with age group, sexual orientation, and gender identity, determines roles, responsibilities, power, and access to resources.

Gender Analysis is a methodology that both:

- Describes existing gender relations in a particular environment, ranging from within households or firms to a larger scale of community, ethnic group, or nation. It involves collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated data and other qualitative and quantitative information.

- Organizes and interprets, in a systematic way, information about gender relations to make clear the importance of gender differences for achieving development objectives.

Gender Equality is the state or condition that affords women and men equal enjoyment of human rights, socially valued goods, opportunities, and resources.

Gender Equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must be taken to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field.

Gender Integration refers to strategies applied in program assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation to take gender norms into account and to compensate for gender-based inequalities.

Gender Norms: are informal rules and shared social expectations which determine and assign socially acceptable roles, behaviors, responsibilities and expectations to male and female identities. By influencing expectations for masculine and feminine behavior considered socially acceptable and appropriate, they directly

affect individuals' choices, freedoms, and capabilities.

Gender-Based Violence is violence derived from gender norms and roles as well as from unequal power relations between women and men. Violence is specifically targeted against a person because of his or her gender, and it affects women disproportionately. It includes, but is not limited to, physical, sexual, and psychological harm (including intimidation, suffering, coercion, and/or deprivation of liberty within the family or within the general community). It includes violence perpetuated by the state.

Intersectionality: A person's identity and social definitions are impacted, not just by their gender, but by other factors that determine their full identity. Other factors may include age, sexual orientation, disability, social class, race, caste, ethnic or religious background, economic wealth, marital status, migrant status, displacement situation and urban/rural setting.

Sex refers to biologically defined and genetically acquired differences between males and females, according to their physiology and reproductive capabilities or potentialities.